

DUKE
UNIVERSITY



DIVINITY SCHOOL
LIBRARY

**EPISCOPACY EXAMINED : OR, THE EVIDENT OFFICIAL
PARITY OF ALL THE AMBASSADORS OF CHRIST :**

SERMON,

DELIVERED

IN HOPKINTON, NEW-HAMPSHIRE,

Lord's Day,

Dec. 22, 1816.

BY ETHAN SMITH,
Minister of Hopkinton.

"One is your Master, even Christ ; and all ye are brethren."....IMMANUEL.

Published at the Request of the Hearers, and others.

CONCORD :
PRINTED BY GEORGE HOUGH.
FEB.....1817.

CHOCOLATE

Sermon.

MATTHEW XXVIII. 18, 19, 20.

And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen.

WE have here, presented by the great Head of the church, the commission of the Gospel ministry. Here is the *grand Chart* of that holy institution under the Gospel, which God has established as the means of the salvation of his people. "For after that in the wisdom of God, the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of *preaching* to save them that believe." "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God."—It must then, be of great importance to man to form correct views of this sacred commission. Errors in relation to it, must be very detrimental to the cause of Christ.

When the validity of Congregational order, or Presbyterian ordination, is denied, and all the ministers of this order are attacked, and treated as uncommissioned, and as having essentially deviated from Gospel rule; it becomes such ministers either to admit the charge as just, and immediately to return to the true order of Christ; or, (if satisfied that they are in the right way) to evince from the word of God the correctness of their own standing; and to vindicate themselves and their people from the high charge of schism and imposition.

The Congregationalists, or Presbyterians, (whom in this Discourse I shall consider as one and the same) are thus attacked. The attack is extensive. The people of God in this place do not escape. I hence feel it to be my indispensable duty to attend to this subject—to lead my people "to the law and to the testimony," that they may form correct decisions upon so material a point. If the watchman see evil coming, and sound not the trumpet, he must be answerable for evil consequences at his peril.

The Congregational ministers in this country, are not *intruders* in this part of the vineyard. They never crowded themselves upon other orders of Christians, established here before them. They have been in peaceable possession of the branch of the kingdom of Christ, planted in this region, from its origin.

It was established, and has grown up, under their nurturing hand, till it has become a notable branch of the kingdom of grace, where the King of Zion has long done wonderful things.

The first Gospel ministers, in this western world, were *Congregational*. They, with their people, fled from the *oppression of the Episcopal church* in the old lands. They were driven to this new and distant region, a world of savage beasts and men, that they might here enjoy liberty of conscience, in the purity of Gospel ordinances. If they be here *followed*, and their sentiments as dissenters *attacked*, it becomes them to vindicate themselves by the word of God. And to this task, they feel themselves abundantly competent.

When a man has been found qualified for the Gospel ministry—has been regularly introduced—has been called by a destitute church and people to take the charge of them in the Lord—has consented to devote his life to this holy service—has been solemnly set over them, and by the Holy Ghost made their *overseer*—has been faithful and successful in his ministry, and is preaching nothing but the plain doctrines of the Gospel, the doctrines of the Reformation, which God has always owned and blessed; has *such an one* a right to expect to be *invaded* by other ministers of Christ? or by any other people duly influenced by evangelical principles? One would think that every principle of the Gospel and of benevolence forbids all such innovating attempts; and that, when such attempts are made, the reply of the Master, relative to the sowing of the tares, becomes applicable, “An enemy hath done this.”

Some of the leading Episcopal sentiments, urged in opposition to Congregational or Presbyterian ministration, are these:—That the Gospel ministry, from the days of the apostles, consists of *three orders*, Bishops, Priests, and preaching Deacons: That the right of ordination, and of confirmation, and the supreme power of the keys, is vested exclusively in *Bishops*, a superior order of Gospel ministers: That the Bishop is invested with a supreme power over his diocese, consisting of a number of individual churches, of subordinate priests, deacons, and laity: And that his authority in the church is so extensive, that nothing Ecclesiastical is to be done; but by power derived from him.

It is said, in the preface to the “form and manner of making, ordaining, and consecrating Bishops, Priests, and Deacons,” that “it is evident unto all men, diligently reading the holy Scriptures, and ancient authors, that from the apostles’ time there have been *three orders of ministers in Christ’s church*,

Bishops, Priests, and Deacons." The Bishops are, by Episcopalian, viewed as the exclusive successors of the apostles, occupying a rank, as they suppose the apostles did, officially superior to the two other orders of Gospel ministers. And all ordinations, not performed by the Bishop, are, in the view of Episcopalian, *null and void*.

But Congregationalists do solemnly declare, that, having searched the Scriptures, such Episcopal sentiments are *not to them evident*; but they think they find ample evidence to the contrary. Of this you will judge for yourselves, after attending to a concise statement of their views in the following Discourse.

Your candid, devout, and patient attention is requested to this subject. We wish, when attacked, to be thus heard in our cause. It being the cause of truth, which we plead, (as we believe) and a cause of vast practical importance, justice and benevolence demand such attention. Some readily imbibe Episcopal peculiarities, who yet, under pretence that they will not *dispute*, refuse to weigh the arguments on our side of the question. Surely our sentiments ought to be examined; and not be condemned unheard.

In discussing the subject proposed, I shall remark,

I. Upon the *commission* in the text, given by Christ to his ministers.

II. Upon the *origin* of Episcopacy.

III. Upon *some things* in the Episcopal system, which I *cannot approve*.

I. I shall remark upon the *commission* in the text, given by Christ to his Gospel ministers.

Under this head, I shall make *seven inquiries*.

1. *To whom* was this commission primarily given?
2. *What* is the *business* assigned in this commission?
3. *How long* was this divine order to continue?
4. Can this commission institute, or admit of, *different grades of office* held by men acting under it?
5. Is the idea admissible, that this commission was, in after days, by the great Head of the church, *varied*?
6. Does the New Testament furnish evidence, that the succession of Gospel ministers was to consist of men holding *different grades of office*?

7. By whom were ordinations in the apostolic age performed?

1. To whom was this commission primarily given? It was given to the *eleven apostles*; and to no others. Thus Matthew, in our context, informs: "Then the *eleven* disciples went away into Galilee, into a mountain, where Jesus had appointed them. And when they saw him, they worshipped him; but some doubted. Then Jesus came and spake unto them, (*the eleven apostles*) saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you. And lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen." Here we learn that the commission was expressly given to the *eleven*; and to none beside. We again read, "Afterward he (Christ) appeared unto the *eleven*, as they sat at meat, and upbraided them with their unbelief. And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature; he that believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved; and he that believeth not, shall be damned." Here was an anticipation of the same commission, given to the *eleven apostles*. Luke, in the beginning of his Gospel, decides that this commission was given to the *eleven disciples*, and to them only. "The former treatise have I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and to teach, until the day that he was taken up, after that he, through the Holy Ghost, had given commandment unto the *apostles*, whom he had chosen." This commandment given, was evidently the commandment in our text. And it was given to the "*apostles*, whom Christ had chosen." And the phrase implies, that it was given to no other. The subsequent very formal and solemn appointment of Matthias, to take the part in the apostleship, from which Judas fell, confirms the same sentiment, that the commission had been given only to the *eleven apostles*. God now appointed Matthias to be numbered with them, under the commission in our text, that their number *twelve* might be completed.

Other persons, in after days, officiated under this commission, after they were ordained thus to do by the apostles, or by men in the sacred office, as will be shewn. But not the least intimation is ever given, that *any* were primarily commissioned by Christ, under the command in our text, but the *eleven apostles*. And in various passages, as we have seen, the commission was restricted to them. The twelve stars on the head of the woman, (the church) Rev. xii. 1. decide that the Gospel ministry commenced exclusively in the *twelve apostles*. Here then, we

find but *one order* of Gospel ministers, when Christ (in the full exercise of all power in heaven and earth) first instituted the Gospel ministry, and immediately ascended to glory. Surely it cannot be from this fact, that the Episcopalians assure us, "that it is evident unto all men—there are *three orders of ministers* in Christ's church, bishops, priests, and deacons," meaning *preaching deacons*. Had the great Head of the church designed this should be the case, why did he not institute them? Why did he not give some intimation of them, when he commissioned his ambassadors? Or why did he not so form their commission as to have *implied*, or at least to have *admitted*, these different official orders? Instead of this, Christ commissioned his first ambassadors with powers *perfectly co-ordinate*, or with a perfect equality of official powers. Their commission was *one* and the *same*. Accordingly Christ had said unto them, "Be ye not called Rabbi; for one is your Master, even Christ; and all ye are brethren." It hence fully appears, that our Lord designed that all his Gospel ministers should, as to their commission and office, be on a *perfect level* under *Him*, their one and only High Priest in heaven. May we not safely look to this first institution of the Gospel ministry, to learn the order which we may safely follow? Who can exhibit a better source of information?

The Episcopal argument then, that the twelve apostles were first commissioned as a superior grade in the Gospel ministry, (as predecessors to modern diocesan *bishops*) and that the *seventy* were commissioned to act as *curates* in subordination to them, is utterly without foundation. We read not a word of these *seventy* in the *Acts of the Apostles*: and we are not furnished with the least evidence of these *seventy*'s being employed in the Gospel ministry, after the resurrection of Christ. They never before had received any thing more than a temporary mission, to make some short excursions in some *cities in Israel*, *whither their Lord was to come*. Having done this, we have no further account of them, as ministers of Christ.—It is certain, as has been made to appear, that they were not included among those whom the risen Savior commissioned as the heralds of his salvation.

2. What is the *business* assigned, in this first commission? "Go ye, and teach all nations; baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you." Preaching had before been confined to the Jews, "the lost sheep of the house of Israel." The atonement was never before actually made; the everlasting righteousness was never before brought in. Hence all preaching before was only *preparatory*.

John, Christ himself, and his disciples in his day, testified that "the kingdom of heaven was at hand." Seventy disciples had been sent out to the various cities in *Israel*, where Christ would come, to prepare the way before his face. They had only a short, subordinate, preparatory mission. But such *disciples* now, when Christ triumphantly ascended his Mediatorial Throne, were laid aside, as to being his special ambassadors, commissioned by the risen Savior; while the *apostles* were commissioned to "go into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature." The way was now, for the first time, prepared for the introduction of the Gospel dispensation. The middle wall of partition, between Jews and Gentiles, was now to be taken down. Hence the commission was given to the eleven, (to whom Matthias was added, and Paul not long after, by the special call of Christ) to go and teach all nations, and perform the duties assigned in our text.

The word in the text rendered "*teach*," signifies in the original, "*disciple*," or make *disciples* of. The duties of the apostles expressed in the text, are, *disciple*, *baptize*, and *teach*. And this has been the common business of all the ambassadors of Christ, from that day to this. These duties (expressed in the commission) *imply* all other duties, essential to the performance of them, and to the perpetuity of the Gospel ministry. The formation of churches then, the administering of the Lord's Supper, the ordaining of ministers as the coadjutors and successors of the apostles, and directing in the order and discipline of the church; these were implied in the apostolic commission. For the commission could not be carried into effect without them. Hence the apostles understood these as being implied; and they performed them without hesitation. But the persons first commissioned performed, with *equal authority*, all the duties contained in their commission. No one of them did or could assume any official character superior to that of another. Under equal authority they all strove to carry the object of their commission into effect. The official duties performed by one, were performed by every one. And the duties enjoined in the text are precisely such, as the elders, ordained by the apostles, did perform; and as all pastors of churches have been ordained to perform, from that day to the present. This fact is evident on the very face of the commission. Surely it cannot be from *this*, that *Episcopalians* inform us, "it is evident unto all men, that there have been *three orders* in the Gospel ministry, from the days of the apostles."

3. *How long* was the commission in our text to continue? It was to continue to "*the end of the world*." "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." The last dispensa-

tion of the covenant of grace was introduced ; and the last order of the teachers of grace instituted. With this order of men, Christ would afford his presence, till he shall appear in the clouds of heaven. But could the men first commissioned continue to execute the order, till the end of the world ? By no means. It was to be true of them, as was said of the Levitical priesthood, " They were not suffered to continue by reason of death."

Here then, is fully implied the *succession* of the ministry that was instituted in the apostles. Here is implied the authority of the apostles to ordain successors. And here is fully implied the official *equality* and even the official *identity* of the successors of the apostles with the apostles themselves. For if the successors of the apostles were not to be officially *equal*, and the same, with the apostles ; then the promise of Christ, " Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world," fail's of being accomplished. In order to a fulfilment of this promise, the persons included in the pronoun "*you*," in the text, must remain officially *the same*, to the end of the world. They cannot belong to a grade of office *superior*, nor *inferior*, to those to whom the promise was made. For then they could not belong to the class in the pronoun "*you*," to whom the promise was made.

There were indeed to be *circumstantial differences* between the apostles, and their coadjutors, and successors in office, whom they should ordain. They were to be found possessed of different kinds and degrees of gifts and qualifications for their work. But these differences were not to originate in any different commissions ; but from the mercy of God ; or the promised presence of Christ, giving them strength to fulfil their commission, giving them strength according to their day.

The apostles among themselves had their different gifts, and their different degrees of usefulness. But these constituted no official grades of difference ; neither between the different apostles, nor between the apostles and their coadjutors and successors, whom they ordained. All officiated under *one* and the *same* commission. And this commission, and the promise, " Lo, I am with you alway," fully shew, that the apostles, and all the true ministers of Christ, to the end of the world, are officially *one and the same*. This deduction is unavoidable. Hence it is impossible to admit, that the ambassadors of Christ were divided into different grades of office. If present elders and pastors of churches can claim the promise of Christ, " Lo, I am with you alway," it must be only by finding that they do belong to the *very order* of men, who first received this promise

of the presence of Christ. If they belong not to *this order*, the promise is not applicable to them.

4. Can the commission in our text institute, or admit of, *different grades of office*, held by men acting under it? Could the apostles find a warrant in this commission to ordain coadjutors and successors, to hold, under this commission, different grades of office from what they held? Is it possible for the same commission to constitute one man a bishop, another a sub-ordinate priest, and another still a preaching deacon, as Episcopilians insist? Doctor Bowden, (a great advocate for Episcopacy) says, "The church of Christ cannot exist without *this*," (meaning these different orders of ministers.) "You, (he says to us) ascribe to your Presbytery (common ministers) the whole authority implied in the apostolic commission; (meaning that in our text:) we ascribe but a part of it to the Presbytery; and the whole of it to the bishops. This is the Jugulum Causæ, (the point on which the controversy turns.) When this shall be once settled, the dispute must come to an end." Let *this point* then, on which the controversy is acknowledged to turn, be examined. The same commission, in the text, has what they call a "*division of powers*." It constitutes one, to whom it is given, a *bishop*: it constitutes another a *priest*: and it constitutes a third a *preaching deacon*. But how can such "*division of powers*" be found or admitted in the text? Can one commission, in the same words, institute different grades of office in different men? It speaks the *same words* to each. Why then does it not mean to each the *same things*? Here is a commission sent from the Governor of the State to three men, precisely in the same words, constituting each a *captain* over a company of soldiers. One of them says, I can perceive in this commission a "*division of powers*." Though the words to each of us are *exactly the same*, yet I can perceive they constitute *me* a *captain*, they constitute *you my lieutenant*, and they constitute the third man *my orderly sergeant*! What would you think of the *discernment* of this captain? Would you, at his direction, consent to act in one of these subordinate grades under him, while yet you hold the same commission, in the same words with himself? Is it possible for the same commission, in the same words, to constitute one man a supreme magistrate, another a subordinate magistrate, and a third man a sheriff? For what purpose is language or writing given, if this be the case? If such liberties may be taken with *our text*, why not with any other text in the Bible? And thus make the same words from the mouth of God, convey one meaning to one man, another meaning to another, and a third meaning to a third!

Where did the apostles, or how could they, ordain different orders of ministers under such a supposed "division of powers" in their commission? Could they have done it, without being desired to assign some reason for such a practice? Here (an inferior priest might say) you ordain me a minister of Christ, to officiate under the same commission with yourselves. Here then, is my commission to go forth and preach the Gospel. But the same words, you inform, convey to me only a part of the authority, which they convey to you, and some others. I am not disposed to dispute your authority, (the subordinate priest might add,) I wish only for explanation, so that I may understand this point, and be able to explain it to others.—Now, it seems as though some such case as this, from some *inquisitive minds*, must have occurred. And the apostles must have found it convenient, if not necessary, to have given some explanation of it, if they had thus ordained. But not a word of any thing of the kind do we find, in the days of the apostles. Let the impartial then, judge whether such a "division of powers" can be contained in our text. Should it appear decided that it cannot be there contained; then, by the concession of Mr. Bowden, the dispute is terminated in our favor.—I proceed to inquire,

5. Is the idea admissible, that the commission in our text was, in after days, by the great Head of the church, varied? Some Episcopilians, finding the great difficulty of supporting such a "division of powers," as contained in the same commission; and yet being quite unprepared to yield up the point in dispute; have advocated the following hypothesis:—That it was found, just at the close of the apostolic age, that a permanent superior order, in the Gospel ministry, was necessary; and that hence the apostles, just before they went off the stage, were inspired to institute this new order. This position is strongly advocated by many Episcopilians. But the question occurs, Who knows that this was the case? Not the least hint of it is found in the word of God; as will be shewn in the next section.

Such a supposition makes Christ a mutable, imperfect Being. He had instituted the Gospel ministry, under the express commission of "all power in heaven and earth;" and under most solemn circumstances. He, who is the "Amen, the faithful and true Witness," who is the same yesterday, to-day, and forever, had with such solemnity established the order of the Gospel ministry, promised his presence with it alway, even to the end of the world, added his solemn Amen, So let it be; and immediately ascended to glory. But this system was afterward found on experiment to be so imperfect, that new expedients must be devised and adopted. And the apostles, in their old age, must

be inspired to institute and establish this *remedy*. And, attending to this view of the subject, an Episcopalian divine (Professor Whitaker) acknowledges, that “*the remedy is almost worse than the disease.*” We would not unite with Mr. Whitaker in this, provided we could find evidence that such a *remedy* was indeed found necessary, and was divinely introduced. But finding not a hint of any such evidence in the sacred Oracles, we deem the supposition inadmissible. We cannot admit that the Savior of the world is so imperfect and mutable a Being!

Had the apostles been inspired to introduce such an order in the Gospel ministry, it must have been left on sacred record, for the direction of the ambassadors of Christ: otherwise, they must have been greatly exposed to err. For a commission once given by Christ, must be esteemed as in full force, till it is abolished with equal authority and evidence, with those, under which it was given. But no evidence exists, in the word of God, that the commission in our text was ever *revoked*, or varied.

Should we therefore be actually convinced, from authentic human records, that the apostles did, in their last days, introduce such an innovation, while yet no account is furnished, in the sacred records, of their *authority from God*, thus to do; we should be unable to view it in any other light, than as an act of their *superannuation*; and no more to be imitated by us, than was the deed of Solomon, in his old age, of building high places to other gods! But such an aspersion upon the character of the apostles is by no means to be admitted. And the belief, that the commission in our text was, in after days, to be thus varied, can by no means obtain. Christ is not divided, nor mutable. He has never left in his kingdom contradictory directions. He would never invalidate a commission given like that in our text. The idea, that Christ would inspire his apostles, in their last days, to effect such a change in the Gospel ministry, to ordain a superior order to act as *bishops*, in the modern sense of the word; and that the knowledge of all this was to be transmitted to succeeding generations by human tradition or history; and yet the history of this event should be so obscure, as is found to be a fact; is utterly incredible.

Episcopalians are very fond of believing, and insinuating, that the peculiarities of their scheme find much countenance in the New Testament. Let us then candidly examine—

6. Does the New Testament furnish evidence that the succession of Gospel ministers was to consist of men holding different *grades of office*? If it were to be thus, the fact must

be ascertained in the New Testament. It is worse than in vain, it is *impious*, to pretend we must believe the affirmative, while yet it is not clearly ascertained in the New Testament. Let this point then be brought to the test.

But here some may inquire, Do we not read in the New Testament, of *apostles, prophets, pastors, teachers, evangelists, elders, overseers, bishops?* Are not here different orders of Gospel ministers? Answer—These refer not to different *grades of office* in the commission; but to different gifts and circumstances of men in the same grade of office. Should they be viewed as relating to the former, it would prove too much, even for *Episcopalians*. It would prove not merely *three official grades*, for which they contend; but it would prove *many*. But while Christ (when he ascended on high, and led captivity captive) gave gifts to men—“*apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers*”—it was “*for the work of the ministry*”—the *one work*, performed under *one* and the *same commission*; conferring on all, in the same words, co-ordinate authority. But Christ, in the promise of his presence with this *one official order* of his ministers, engages to furnish them with gifts, graces, and aids, according to their day; and according to the wants of those, to whom they minister. “*My grace is sufficient for thee; my strength is made perfect in weakness.*” “*As thy day is, so shall thy strength be.*”

Hence, as the apostles were first to go forth and beat the way through a persecuting pagan world, and while the canon of Scripture was not yet filled, Christ endued them with miraculous powers; gifts of healing, and of tongues, and supernatural authority. These miraculous aids to the first ministers continued so long as they were necessary; not to constitute the apostles a superior official order; but to furnish them for the special work of their day. But their *title, (apostles)* and their *miraculous gifts*, did not result from any superiority in their commission. The term *apostles* resulted from the peculiarity of their case—being *first commissioned and sent out* by Christ himself. And their miraculous gifts resulted from the peculiar grace of God, to enable them to fulfil their commission. But *these no more* gave the apostles an official pre-eminence over other Gospel ministers, than the special gifts and superior usefulness of Paul, compared with some others of the apostles, prove that he possessed an official pre-eminence over them. Paul did not derive his special gifts and usefulness from any superiority of commission; but from the promise of Christ to his ministers, to give them strength according to their day. From this promise, ministers, in all ages, have derived different degrees of gifts and of usefulness; but not different grades of office.

The apostles derived what of *infallibility* and of *superior authority* they possessed, immediately from God himself, to furnish them for their special work ; and not from any superiority of commission. For their commission (which was to continue to the end of the world) was but *one* and the *same* to the apostles, and to all the ambassadors of Christ. But the *miraculous powers* of the apostles gave them an authority and influence, which none of their successors have possessed.

We are furnished with various catalogues of ministerial gifts. To the Corinthians, Paul says, " For all things are yours ; whether *Paul*, or *Apollos*, or *Cephas*, or the world." These names allude to the different *gifts* of these ministers of Christ. Again, " God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healing, helps, governments, diversities of tongues." There are *eight* distinctions noted among the ministers of Christ, in the first Christian age. Will any pretend they denote *eight official grades* of Gospel ministers ? Here we find the truth of what has just been observed, that the title of the apostles themselves is ranked only among the different ministerial gifts. The title *apostles*, no more marks a distinct official order in the Gospel ministry, than do the titles " *prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers,*" mark distinct official orders. We read, " And he gave to some *apostles*, and to some *prophets*, and to some *evangelists*, and to some *pastors* and *teachers*." The sense is by Paul ascertained ; " There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit." And all his writings shew that these diversities of gifts were held by men, who were in the *same grade of office*, under one and the same commission.

In the four beasts (living creatures) in the Revelation, which are but symbols of the Gospel ministry, four distinct classes of ministerial gifts are noted. The first was like a *lion* ; strong, bold : the second was like a *calf*; (an *ox*) patient, profitable : the third had the face of a *man* ; peculiarly rational, affectionate : and the fourth was like a *flying eagle* ; swift of flight, of piercing vision, and soaring toward heaven. These cannot mark four official grades of ministers. They denote only the different talents possessed by men under the same commission, in the *same grade of office*.

We find not the least intimation in the word of God, that the apostles ordained different orders of ministers. They ordained *elders* in *every church*. These elders are occasionally called by different names. They were known as *elders*, (presbyters) and *overseers*, (in the original, bishops.) The term *elder* alludes to the *dignity* of their office ; and the term *overseer* (bishop) to its

active service. If one of these terms were greater than the other, we should say, the term *elder*, which alludes to the *dignity of the office*, is the greatest. But one of these was never designed to be greater than the other. For they were, by the Holy Ghost, applied promiscuously to the same persons. And in no place in the Bible are they used, as in modern Episcopacy, to denote different grades of office. Let this now be ascertained.

In Acts xx. 17. Paul at Miletus called to him the elders of the church of Ephesus, and had with them his last interview. Among other things, he charged them to "take heed to themselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost had made them *overseers*;" in the original it is, *bishops*. These elders then, were by the Holy Ghost made *bishops*, as well as *elders*, over their own flocks. And in this last solemn interview between Paul and all the ministers of Ephesus, in which he enjoined on them their official duties, not a hint do we find given of any bishops of superior order among them. No; notwithstanding all that is said, in modern times, of Timothy's having been constituted a diocesan bishop over these elders of Ephesus, not a word is now said, in so solemn a valediction, to *bishop Timothy*; or concerning any relative duties between these *elders*, and any *bishop* over them. All whom Paul addressed, were *elders*; all were *bishops*: and each one was to be a *good bishop over his own flock*.

Timothy (as Paul's companion and helper) had been induced, at some period when Paul left Ephesus, to abide there for a season, "to charge some that they teach no other doctrine;" and to aid in the establishment of Christianity in that important region. But Timothy was soon away again from that region, ravelling and preaching in other places; at Macedonia, Corinth, Jerusalem, and last of all at Rome: for Paul had directed him to "do the work of an evangelist;" which is a very different work from that of a modern diocesan bishop. Timothy had never been constituted such a bishop at Ephesus. Had he been thus constituted, some notice must have been taken, in that last interview of Paul with the elders of Ephesus, of Timothy, his own son in the faith." But not a hint is there given of Timothy, nor of such an office. No; the ambassadors of Christ here were all on a *level*; all *elders*; all *bishops*. The celebrated expositor, Dr. Whitby, (though an Episcopalian) concedes the point in these words: "There is no satisfactory evidence of Timothy's having resided longer at Ephesus, than was necessary to execute a special and temporary mission to the church in that place." The celebrated Scott says, "There is no proof that Timothy ever stately resided there."

All the Episcopal arguments then, from the supposed establishment of Timothy, as ruling bishop at Ephesus, are *without foundation!* These arguments will answer a considerable purpose to decoy uninformed and incautious people. But they are *deceptive and vain.*

In Phil. i. 1. we learn, that no officers were known in the church there, but *bishops* and *deacons*. "Paul and Timothy the servants of Christ, to all the saints in Jesus Christ that are at Philippi, with the *bishops* and *deacons*." These bishops were the same in office with the elders of Ephesus, just noted. And no grade of church officers was known at Philippi, between bishops and deacons. A deacon in those days was not appointed to preach, as in modern Episcopacy. He was appointed to manage church temporalities; so that the ministers of the word might not be called to "*leave the word of God, to serve tables.*" See Acts vi. 1—6. And no grade of church officer intervened between them and *bishops*, in the apostolic age. And these bishops were their *elders*, their *pastors*.

This sentiment is confirmed in 1 Pet. v. 1. "The *elders* which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder,—feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof. In the original it is, "*being bishops thereof;*" or acting the part of bishops. Here Peter was an *elder*. The testimony is left on sacred record, that Peter was officially of the same rank with the *elders*, whom he ordained. This concession of Peter was not a vain compliment of one in higher office, ranking himself, *for once*, with those in a lower grade of office. No it was inspired, and left on sacred record for our rule of faith and practice. Peter, in office, was not superior to an elder. Hence the other apostles were not, in *commission*, superior to the elders whom they ordained.

But Peter exhorts his brother-*elders* to be *faithful bishops* over their people. Certainly then, the office of modern diocesan *bishops* was not known in the days of Peter.

The same things appear in the Epistles to Timothy and Titus. Timothy remained at Ephesus, for a season, (only as a *first among equals in office*) to superintend the organization of churches there. For this reason, (and to afford all other ministers, to the end of the world, instruction relative to their successors) Paul ascertains the character of the candidates for the Gospel ministry. He says, "It is a true saying, If any man desire the office of a *bishop*, he desireth a good work. *bishop* then must be blameless—Likewise must the *deacons* be grave." Here, as in Paul's valediction to the elders of Ephesus,

sus, these elders are called bishops. And deacons are noted as next to them in office, and the only church officer beside them. Hence Timothy could have had no idea of a *diocesan bishop* in that place, to rule over the elders. No ; such an office was never hinted to him, nor by him. No directions were given relative to the qualifications of such a ruler ; while those of elders, and deacons, were described.

The same thing is found in Paul's Epistle to Titus. Titus was left for a season at Crete, as Timothy had been at Ephesus, to "set in order the things that are wanting, and to ordain elders in every city." Here we note, that not a word is said of his ordaining one or more there, to superintend those elders, or to be his successor in a superior office. Had this been the will of God, and the true order of his kingdom, such a direction must surely have been given. Not a hint of such a thing, however, is found. But he was to see to it, that *elders* were ordained. And he was taught, at the same time, that these *elders* were *bishops*. This is ascertained in the directions given relative to the qualifications of the elders to be ordained. Paul calls them *elders* ; and then adds, "If any be blameless, the husband of one wife, having faithful children, not accused of riot, or unruly. For a *bishop* must be blameless, as the steward of God." Here is the reason assigned, why the *elders* must be of the good character just described ; "for a *bishop* must be blameless." So natural was it for Paul to speak of the *one* and *only* order of Gospel ministers, as both *elders* and *bishops*. And so abundantly were we assured by the Holy Ghost, that in the apostolic age, an apostle, an elder, a bishop, an evangelist, and whatever other titles were given to the ambassadors of Christ, all these titles belonged to ministers in *one* and the *same* grade of office, under the commission in our text. "One is your Master, even Christ ; and all ye are brethren."

Nor can the direction of the epistles of Christ to the seven Asiatic churches, in the Revelation, being "to the *angel*" of each church, control this ample evidence ; nor prove that those churches had bishops of an order superior to elders. It was a custom in those times for each church to have a plurality of pastors. And Episcopalians labor to prove, from the direction of those seven epistles to the *angel* of each church, or city, that such city had its *diocesan bishop*, to govern those elders and churches. But this argument is ineffectual to prove their point. The language of the Revelation is highly figurative. The ministry, though in the hands of a plurality of pastors in each church, might be denoted by the phrase, "the *angel*" of that church. Or, (what is more probable) in every church, even

among a plurality of elders, or pastors, *one was senior*, and was a standing moderator. And what could be more natural than for an epistle to each church to be directed to him? All that was said to him, as pastor, would equally apply to his colleague pastors.

The symbol of the “*star*,” or *candle*, in each of those seven golden candlesticks, is likewise in the singular number. But will Episcopalians, or any others, doubt, but this *star*, or *light*, in the candlestick, included all the teaching elders, or pastors, in each church? This Episcopalian argument then, decides nothing in their favor.

Thus the New Testament gives no countenance to, but forbids the sentiment, that the succession of the Gospel ministry was to consist of men in different grades of office.*

This will further appear, when we inquire,

7. *By whom were ordinations, in the apostolic age, performed?* A decision of this question must afford conclusive evidence upon our subject. For it must infallibly decide what God would have his ministers believe and practise, relative to ordinations.

Episcopalians insist, that all the power of ordination is vested in their bishops. Each bishop may ordain; but elders (common pastors of churches) have no such power. Now, if this be correct, it is of infinite importance for Congregational ministers and churches to know it, and to awake from their *fatal delusion!*

Let us then, recur “to the law and to the testimony.” If Episcopalians be correct in this point, it must be because ordinations were so performed in the apostles’ days. For here is our

* Episcopalians, being perplexed with the scantiness of evidence in their favor in the New Testament, betake themselves to the Old Testament, in hopes of finding something to their purpose. Here they find a high priest; and priests and levites acting under him. And this they attempt to represent as a model of the Gospel ministry, under the care of bishops. But this can be nothing to their purpose. There was but one high priest in the church of Israel. He was an eminent type—not of modern bishops—but of Jesus Christ, our Great High Priest in Heaven, the one “Shepherd and Bishop of our souls.” The Gospel church is under this one High Priest. And all her ministers are, under *Him*, *brethren*, on an official equality. This is the order of our Great High Priest himself. Had the Old Testament ministry been designed, in this particular, a model of the ministry of salvation under the Gospel, we must revert back to *Papery*, where the one high priest of the militant church is set up, in his holiness, the pope. But nothing can be more *rude* than such arguments. Had Christ so modelled his system of Gospel ministry, we would not have objected. But he has *not* seen fit to do it.

"pattern showed in the mount." We, as believers in divine revelation, can admit no other rule. How then did the apostles ordain? How was Paul ordained? How was Timothy? Were they ordained by a single bishop, or apostle? Or have we any account of an ordination, in the apostolic age, being so performed? Not one! We have not many accounts of ordinations in those days; but we have *some*:—and these are sufficient for our guidance. The few instances recorded must have been left on sacred record with a view to our instruction; and they furnish an *ample guide*.

The first ordination recorded in the apostles' days, was their ordination of deacons, to take care of the poor, and the property of the church—See Acts vi. 1—6. But these, we find, were ordained by prayer, and imposition of the *hands of the apostles*. All the apostles are represented as mutually performing this business: "whom they set before the apostles; and when they had prayed, *they laid their hands on them*."—Had Christ designed so to model his church, as that bishops singly should have the power to ordain ministers, would not some evidence of such a design have been here furnished? But in the ordination even of deacons, (the lowest officer in the church) *all* the apostles present must unite.

Of the ordination of Paul, and Barnabas, we read, Acts xiii. 1—3. "Now there were in the church that was at Antioch, certain prophets and teachers; as Barnabas, and Simeon, and Lucius, and Manaen;—as they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them. And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid *their hands on them*, *they sent them away*." Here the ordination of those prime missionaries was performed, not by a bishop, or an apostle; but by a *presbytery*; a collection of ministers in office; but not a single apostle among them! No; when Paul, the great apostle to the Gentiles, and Barnabas also with him, were to be ordained to their work, under immediate direction of the Holy Ghost, (a most important ordination indeed!) no direction was given, nor care taken, to send for the apostles, nor even one of them! But a number of Gospel ministers, (elders, called *prophets and teachers* in the church at Antioch) providentially present, fasting and worshipping, were taken to constitute the *presbytery*, or council, for their ordination! *What can Episcopilians say to this?* Does this afford a warrant for their peculiarities? I think this is the only ordination of any Gospel teacher, of which we have a distinct historical account in the New Testament. It must certainly then, have been designed that we should make much of this instance, in forming our sentiments relative to the *power and mode of ordain-*

ing Gospel ministers. And surely it is far from deciding, that ordinations were to be performed exclusively by the apostles ; or by any peculiar successors of the apostles, as superior officers in the Gospel ministry. It is so far from deciding this, that it *peremptorily decides the contrary.*

We find one more inspired directory, relative to the *power* and *mode* of ordination, in a direct allusion to the ordination of Timothy. 1 Tim. iv. 14. " Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the *laying on of the hands of the presbytery.*" Timothy's ordination then, was by the imposition of the hands of a *presbytery*; a word which imports a collection of presbyters, or elders; such as the apostles ordained in every church. Where then have we the *least hint* in the word of God, which can even *seem* to favor Episcopal peculiarities ?

The *Episcopalians* please themselves, that Timothy was commissioned to ordain, and Titus commissioned to ordain, elders in every city ! These they imagine must have been diocesan bishops ; and that present diocesan bishops are here furnished with their exclusive power of ordination ! 2 Timothy, ii. 2. " And the things, which thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also." But we have no evidence that this direction was given to Timothy any otherwise than as being *first* (in point of gifts and improvements) among equals in office. Timothy, only as a more experienced elder, was to lead the way in the fulfilment of this commission. But the question is, *in what manner* was this commission to be fulfilled ? Did it constitute Timothy exclusively an ordaining council ? Or was he only to see to it, that it was regularly fulfilled by an ordaining presbytery, or council ? Certainly the latter, provided he could obtain such a council. All the arguments already adduced, go to evince the truth of this : and the mode of ordination, in the days of Timothy, goes to confirm it. The command to Timothy was as completely fulfilled by his performing the duty by a presbytery, as by his performing the sacred work by himself alone. Timothy well knew how he himself was ordained ; that it was by a presbytery, under the superintendance of his spiritual father Paul. He knew how Paul and Barnabas had been ordained, by a collection of elders. Can we imagine that he was now directed to deviate from such well known precedents ? It is utterly incredible. We must have the most positive proof, before we shall be able to believe this. But the aforesaid text affords no proof of such an event.

Paul, when directing Timothy to ordain faithful men to the Gospel ministry, would take it for granted that Timothy knew

the proper mode of ordination ; that it was by a *presbytery*, (when such an one could be obtained) For both Paul and Timothy had themselves in that manner been ordained. Paul could not suppose that his own son in the faith would ever form an idea of departing from this apostolic custom, and would fancy himself to be a bishop to ordain in the modern sense of the word. No ; Paul could have no kind of apprehension of this. He would have Timothy commit those things, received from him in a presbytery, and before many witnesses, as he had received them. But he had received them by *presbyterian ordination*. How is it possible then for any to imagine, that the young Timothy would deviate from such an established rule ? Or was Paul so fond of innovation, as to set Timothy into a new and untried course ?

The command now applies (as it was designed to apply) to every ordained minister, down to the end of the world. As likewise does the following : " Lay hands suddenly on no man." These directions were given to Timothy only as similar directions would now be given to a leading missionary, who is going to some new and destitute region, to collect churches, and ordain elders over them. But such a missionary (if he were the man that he ought to be) would never *dream* of inferring from such directions from a President of a Missionary Society, that he is hereby constituted an officer in the church, of superior rank over those whom he ordains. Neither would he conceive an idea, that he *alone* must ordain, provided he could obtain the assistance of other ministers. If he could not obtain assistance, then, no doubt, he must *alone* perform the sacred business.

These remarks equally apply to the case of Titus, left at Crete to " ordain elders in every city." And both the noted authors, Whitby and Scott, frankly give up the idea, that Timothy and Titus were diocesan bishops in those places. The former says concerning Timothy, " There is no satisfactory evidence of his having resided longer at Ephesus, than was necessary to execute a special temporary mission there." Of Titus he says, " He was left at Crete, only to ordain elders in every city ; and to set in order the things that were wanting ; and having done this work, Paul sends for him the *very next year to Nicopolis*." Scott says, " We cannot, indeed, by any means, infer the divine right of Episcopacy from the authority exercised by Timothy, Titus, and the other evangelists." This is a candid acknowledgment of that great and good man ; and the truth of it is most evident. I am fully convinced that nothing of the peculiar sentiments of *Episcopalians* exists in the word of God ; and that our eyes must be directed to *later periods*, than the writings of the sacred Volume, to find the origin of their system.

I proceed therefore,

II. To remark upon the *origin* of Episcopacy.

Many Episcopalians admit, that but little evidence appears in the sacred pages in favor of their peculiarities. But they insist that something of their scheme was found to be necessary at a very early period ; and even had the countenance of the apostles, in their last days. I am not convinced there is any evidence of this, either *within* or *without* the covers of the sacred Volume. The Bible has been examined ; with what success, the reader may judge. Let some attention now be paid to human records.

I am pleased with the candor of Mr. Scott upon this subject. If he was educated an Episcopalian, and finds it convenient to remain in their communion ; yet he expresses his views as follows : " We cannot, indeed, by any means, infer the divine right of Episcopacy from the authority exercised by *Timothy*, *Titus*, and *other evangelists*. Yet it is highly probable, at least, that it was early found *expedient*, and *conducive to peace*, to have a stated presiding inspector, of approved wisdom and piety, who might superintend the pastors and the affairs of a few neighboring churches, as *moderator* and *censor* ; and be peculiarly attentive to the appointment of church officers. Hence a moderate Episcopacy was very early, probably even while some of the apostles lived, generally prevalent in the church."

I am not disposed to contest such a view of the subject as this. I object only to the affixing to it the term *Episcopacy*. I should much prefer some appellation more fitly expressive of the social Christian connexion designed.

The above scheme of Mr. Scott differs essentially from the Episcopacy urged upon us by American Episcopalians at this day ; and from what we find long maintained by the English church.

Mr. Scott's first bishops, (to call them so) if I understand him, were only *stated presiding inspectors*, prudently chosen by their equals, or by the churches, as moderators, and censors, to be peculiarly attentive to the appointment of church officers, and to church affairs. They were chosen from a sense of expediency, as being conducive to peace and good order, and as being fully consistent with the explanation which has been given of the commission in our text.

How far these men, described by Mr. Scott, differ from the standing moderators or presidents of consociations of churches,

formed in the earliest days, others may judge. It is the opinion of good men, (by no means Episcopalian) that it was, at a very early period, found expedient, and a duty, for ministers and churches, in vicinities, to form with each other their peculiar connexions ; or to *consociate* for their mutual benefit. Such consociations had their moderators, chosen to preside over them in this social Christian connexion. I am ready enough to apprehend, that this took place with the countenance of the apostles ; and not only so, but with the full approbation of the great Head of the church. For such a consociating principle is believed to be implied in the New Testament, in directions given to the people of God ; and to have been in operation from the beginning—See arguments in support of this belief, in the Major Panoplist for November, 1816, page 489.

Clement of Alexandria, in the second century, speaks of “*the first seat*” in the *presbytery*. In this clause, Episcopalian wish to find something in favor of prelacy. But the “*first seat*” in a *presbytery* must surely be filled by a *presbytery* only, as well as the *last*. But this “*first seat*,” spoken of by Clement, must be viewed as occupied by a standing moderator of what we may call a *consociation*—a consociate body of ministers and churches, formed for their mutual benefit. Jerome, a most learned divine of the fourth century, Mosheim informs us, notes this order in the church. Speaking against the usurpation of bishops, (by and by to be noted) he says, “As therefore the presbyters know, that by the *custom of the church*, they are subject to him who is their *president*; so let bishops know, that they are above presbyters more by the *custom of the church*, than by the true dispensation of Christ.” Here we learn, from that noted father, that it was a well known principle in the church, that presbyters (pastors of churches) were, by *established custom*, subject to him who was their *president*. Certainly then, they *had* a standing president. And he could be president to no other than a consociating connexion of brethren. Such a connexion, it is believed, was established in the earliest ages.

It was from a *gradual abuse* of this prime Ecclesiastical order, that Episcopacy arose. The term *bishop*, in the third century, instead of being applied to presbyters, as before, and in the apostles’ days, began to be appropriated to the *prime presbyter*, or *president*. These presidents, or moderators, it seems, were chosen for life. It became a custom to elect to this office the elder of a chief city : and it so happened, that his respectability became proportionate to the importance of the city in which he dwelt. Such presidents became noted and popular ; till finally, as darkness and error increased, an exclusive *title* and official authority were ascribed to them. They became *bishops*,

in a sense very different from the bishops in the apostles' days. This same process rapidly continued till the bishop of Rome eclipsed all the bishops of other cities : and he claimed and obtained titles and prerogatives still higher ; till he came to fulfil the prediction, " so that he, as God, sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God."

After the reformation from Popery, (in the sixteenth century) great degrees of the *peculiarities* of the hierarchy of the dark ages, were retained in the Ecclesiastical government and worship of the Church of England. While they renounced the corrupt doctrines of the papal hierarchy, much of her mode of Ecclesiastical government, and many of her modes and forms of worship and religion, were fondly retained.

This *undoubtedly* is a correct view of the origin of Episcopacy. More of the evidence, on which this view of the subject rests, will be exhibited.

Episcopalians have taken great pains to prove, from the early writings of the fathers, that Episcopacy was established (as has been remarked) at the close of the apostolic age, and under the authority of the apostles. But here they appear not less deficient, in point of unequivocal proof, than in their attempts to substantiate their scheme from the sacred Oracles.

Very great dependance is made by them on the epistles of Ignatius, bishop of Antioch, who is said to have suffered martyrdom early in the second century. But we have two objections to their confidence in Episcopacy derived from Ignatius. We argue, that the Ignatian epistles have been corrupted, as they relate to this subject, by later and spurious writers ; that no dependance is to be placed on what is found among his writings, relative to the order of bishops, or the Episcopal government of the church, in the first or second century.

Dr. Chauncey, in a volume entitled, "*A Complete View of Episcopacy, as exhibited from the fathers of the Christian church, until the close of the second century,*" has collected all the writings of those fathers now extant, which bear any relation to this subject.* As a historical production upon this subject, this

* We have here presented an account of all the authors of the two first centuries ; though the writings of some of them are lost—Barnabas, Dionysius, Hermas, Clement of Rome, Polycarp, Ignatius, Papias, Quadratus, Aristides, Agrippa, Hegesippus, Justin Martyr, Milti, Tatian, Athanagoras, Hermias, Theophilus, Apollinaris, Pynitus, Philip, Modestus, Mosanus, Bardesanes, Poltimus, Ireneus, Victor, Polycrates, Bachylus, Heraclytus, Maximus, Appion, Candidus, Sextus, Judas, Arabianus, Serapion, Rhodon, Pantenus, and Clement of Alexandria.

book must be esteemed a valuable work ; and it is recommended to all, who have any doubts concerning the order of the church in the two first centuries, as learned, judicious, and clear.

A fair exhibition is here made, of all the writings now to be found, from which any knowledge is to be derived relative to the officers and government of the church, in the first and second centuries. In this work it is made clearly evident, that the authors of the two first centuries were utter strangers to Episcopacy. Bishops and elders, with them, were the same : and not one of them has left any thing in favor of such a system as modern Episcopacy, if we except Ignatius. On him the advocates of prelacy make great reliance. The epistles which bear his name, do indeed speak with zeal of three orders of men in the Gospel ministry—*bishops, clærs, and preaching deacons*. But we contend, that no dependance is to be placed on this testimony. Some of the reasons for this, I will state ; or will show, that what appears in his epistles in favor of Episcopacy, must have been interpolated, or written after the days of Ignatius, by impostors. This was a noted practice in the third, fourth, and subsequent centuries, as all agree, for designing persons to insert what they pleased, into the writings of eminent authors of earlier days. The Christian world became greatly corrupted with such spurious writings, as darkness was creeping upon the church, and the way preparing for the rise of the Man of Sin : and it is believed that the *writings and name of Ignatius* were thus abused.

Fifteen epistles have appeared, bearing the name of Ignatius. Eight of these are (by the consent of all parties) rejected, as evidently spurious ; or destroyed with interpolations. The question then arises, who knows but some of the seven, that are retained, or some things in them, are likewise *forgesies* ? Some able critics believe this to be the case. As the name of Ignatius was thus evidently abused, in the eight repudiated epistles ; what certain dependance can be placed on what is said, as being from him, in the other seven epistles, relative to the point under consideration ? especially considering that those seven epistles talk a language, upon this point, which is not to be found in any of the other legitimate writings of the two first centuries. No such ideas are found in them, as are crowded into his epistles : But their testimonies go fully to confute those furnished in his epistles. The language of these seven retained epistles, relative to bishops, is such, as to testify against its having been written by Ignatius ; or indeed, that if it were written by him, he was far from being worthy of the confidence which has been reposed in him.

Several quotations, from his abundant exaltations of the bishops, found in the seven epistles, will evince the truth of this remark. He is made to say, "Let all reverence the bishop, as the Father," [i. e. as God the Father.] "You are joined to your bishop, as the church is to Christ, and as Jesus Christ to the Father." "It is evident we ought to look upon the bishop, as we would do upon the Lord himself." "Your bishop presides in the place of God." "As the Lord did nothing without the Father, so neither do ye any thing without your bishop; and the presbyters." "See that ye follow your bishop as Jesus Christ [followed] the Father." "He that honors the bishop, shall be honored of God; but he that does any thing without his knowledge, ministers to the devil." "My soul be surety for them, that submit to their bishop, with their presbyters, and deacons." "The Spirit spake, [to me] saying on this wise, *Do nothing without the bishop.*"

Can this be the language of the venerable Ignatius? Did he learn any thing like this from his divine Master? Did Christ utter such language relative to the *exalted dignity of bishops?* The whole soul of Ignatius is made to appear filled with a sense of the amazing importance of the Episcopal dignity! while at the same time it is taught that he *himself* was a *bishop*. Had Ignatius learned this from *Him*, who was "meek and lowly in heart?" who says to his apostles, "Be not ye called Rabbi; for one is your Master, even Christ; and all ye are brethren." In the near view of his martyrdom, Ignatius is made to utter such language as has been noted; and, as one would think, to appear more concerned for the honor of *bishops*, than for that of Christ.—Disgusting compound Greek words are found in these epistles, far from being consonant to the simplicity of the age in which Ignatius lived; but very consonant to the corrupt ages which followed; such as calling his brethren *God-worthy*, *God-bearers*, *Temple-bearers*, *Christ-bearers*, *Holy Ghost-bearers*; calling himself, *God-bearer*.

The following sentence appears in his epistle to the Magnesians:—"I exhort you, that you study to do all things in divine concord; your bishop presiding in the place of God; your presbyters in the place of the council of the apostles; and your deacons, (most dear to me) being entrusted with the *ministry of Jesus Christ.*"—Here deacons, as such, are made *ministers of Christ*; contrary to their express apostolic commission, Acts vi. 1.—Bishops here, like the pope, are put in the place of God; and presbyters in the place of the apostles. The correctness of the latter idea I admit: But it is giving up Episcopacy, to admit that the presbyters (elders) succeeded in the same commission with the apostles.

In another passage, Ignatius is made to say, " Let all reverence the *deacons*, as Jesus Christ." Can such writings be received as the genuine productions of so great and good a man as Ignatius ? They appear not like the productions of the first or second centuries ; but like the corrupt productions of darker ages ; exalting the bishop into the place of God ; and making religion much to consist in a blind passive confidence in his infallibility ! Such a sentiment forms a great contrast with the true religion of Jesus Christ ; as well as with the writings of the contemporaries of Ignatius.

But after all, let it be remembered, not a word appears in the Ignatian epistles, to show that the bishops of the period in which they were written, possessed the exclusive power of *ordination*, of *confirmation*, or of the *government of the church*. And the bishop there described, was so far from being a *diocesan* bishop, that he was evidently *parochial*, presiding over a *single church*. All his charge *met in one place*. And he was required to know every person under his care by name ; and to pay attention to every man-servant, and maid-servant. Certainly then, he could not be a *diocesan bishop*, presiding over *many churches*. Those Ignatian sentiments, (by whomsoever they were penned) were produced after the ambitious distinction between *bishops* and *elders* was clearly under way, and was struggling to gain importance ; but before diocesan prelacy was well digested, or much understood.

These writings, imputed to Ignatius, are important authorities with Episcopalianists, to prove the existence of prelacy in the first ages from the apostles. But Dissenters find a sufficiency of writings, in those ages, of indisputable authenticity, which shew that they had no knowledge of any such sentiments.

It would be too unwieldy for this discourse, to furnish very full quotations from those authors. Some of their writings, most favorable to Episcopacy, shall be presented in a note, subjoined for the benefit of those who may not find it convenient to peruse the volume before noted. It is in those writings clearly implied, that no officers were known in the church, in the first and second centuries, but *elders* and *deacons*. These are often spoken of ; but no order officially superior to elders, is in those writings mentioned, or implied. The writers of those days often speak, as did the apostles, of the same persons being both *elders* and *bishops*.

Some of the words and sentences of those authors are pressed into the service of modern Episcopalianists. But with what cor-

rectness this is done, you may form some judgment, by perusing the subjoined note.*

* 1. When Hermas cautions his brethren against aspiring after "first seats," and seeking vain honors, Episcopalians are fond of supposing these "first seats" must have been the episcopates of diocesan bishops. Upon the same principle, if any preacher now should caution his brethren against ambition, and aspiring after "first seats," and to be called Rabbi, he must be esteemed an Episcopalian! — In one passage, in a diffuse strain, Hermas speaks of "apostles, and bishops, and doctors, and ministers." Here he is supposed to favor Episcopacy! But this passage as clearly makes an official distinction between *apostles* and *bishops*, as between *bishops* and *doctors*, or teachers. And if the sentence were designed to distinguish different official *grades* of ministers, it makes four orders. This is *one* too many, even for Episcopalians: But how often do we speak of "apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers?" Does this make us Episcopalians?

2. Clement of Rome has, by some Episcopalians, been brought in, to testify in their favor. And indeed, should we admit that certain writings, ascribed to him, were truly *his*, and were not gross impositions, produced in later and dark periods, he must be esteemed an Episcopalian. The "Apostolical Constitutions," "Apostolical Canons," "Recognitions," "Clementinas," "Prefixed Epistle of Clement to James," and the "Epitome of the Acts of Peter," which bear the name of Clement, are *most clearly spurious*. But very few are disposed now to plead for them. They form a most wretched contrast with the writings of the apostles. They inform, that *bishops* are to be "venerated and honored with all kinds of honor;" as having "received from God the power of life and death, in judging sinners, and condemning them to eternal flames." They exhort the people to "reverence their bishops as kings, and to honor them as their Lord." In these writings we find forms of prayer to be used at the "ordinations of bishops, presbyters, deacons, readers, and singers." Here we find the Papal use of "oil in baptism" prescribed. Here also is an "office for the dead," to intercede for them, that God would "pardon their sins, and receive their souls." — In these writings we are presented with rules for the form and magnificence of houses for public worship; that they must be "oblong, and facing the east;" they must have an 'altar;' a 'bishop's throne' in such a place—there the bishop must appear in 'splendid, shining vestments, and must make upon his forehead the sign of the cross'—and much of such nonsensical gibberish. Those therefore, who will receive the testimonies said to be of Clement, in favor of Episcopacy, must acknowledge *all this wicked trumpery*, as coming from him; yea, from the apostles.

But the writings of Clement, which are *evidently his*, exhibit very different sentiments. Here we find nothing of Episcopacy; but quite the reverse.—In his celebrated Epistle to the Corinthians, he labors to compose their differences with their elders, which differences had become very notorious and alarming.—Here, if that church had been under bishops, or had known such an order, it certainly must have been ascertained, and the point decided. But not a word does he say, relative to such an order; though his subject imperiously demanded it, had such an order existed. He reminds them, that the apostles, "preaching through cities and countries, constituted their *first fruits* (meaning first converts) for *bishops* and *deacons*." And he says, alluding to a prophecy in Isaiah Ix. 19. "I will appoint their bishops in righteousness, and their deacons in faith." Only these *two orders* of Ecclesiastical officers are to be found in the genuine writings of Clement. He blames the Corinthians for "casting their presbyters [elders] out of their Episcopacy." Certainly he would not have written thus, had their Episcopacy been like that of modern date; or had not elders and bishops been one and the same. The whole strain of his Epistle utterly forbids, that Clement knew any thing of an order of ministers, officially superior to the elders, whom the apostles ordained over the churches.

3. Polycarp, bishop of Smyrna, is introduced as *seeming* to favor Episcopacy. And as he was a disciple of St. John, and an eminent father, his testimony must be of vast weight. One sentence of his is selected, and pressed into this service:

Those words and sentences thus improved, do not, by any means, necessarily convey the sense thus forced upon them. Some of them hard'y seem to convey it: and other parts of the writings of the same authors generally, do much more clearly imply the reverse of such sentiments. Many learned and pious Episcopalian, and even bishops, have made frank and full confessions upon this subject. Bishop Craft, in a book entitled,

It is the address of his Epistle to the Philippians:—"Polycarp, and the presbyters that are with him, to the church of God at Philippi."—Here he seems to be a diocesan bishop, having his presbyters under him. "Polycarp, and the presbyters that are with him." But does his having presbyters with him, prove that he was any thing more than a *presbyter with them*? It is readily admitted, that he was probably their *moderator*, or *president*. But how weak must be the cause, which feels the need of such arguments as this! The Epistle of Polycarp exhibits full evidence that he was a total stranger to diocesan prelacy. For he proceeds to describe what *deacons* must be—blameless; and then what their *elders* must be—compassionate, merciful: and no other order of church officers is hinted by him. He exhorts the Philippians to be "subject to elders, and deacons." Here is the same sentiment with that of Paul, relative to our question. Paul, in his address to the Philippians, says, "To the saints at Philippi, with the *bishops*, and *deacons*." Polycarp calls these same officers, "*elders and deacons*." Episcopalian, to evade the force of this evidence from the united testimony of Paul and Polycarp, say, the bishop of Philippi might have been *absent*. Others say, he might have been *dead*. Upon which the noted Jameison makes the following remark: "Philippi is no less fatal to the Episcopal, than its neighboring plains were to the Pompeian cause. For Episcopalian are stung and confounded with the very first words of Paul to that church. And among their other shifts, they answer, that *the bishop was often absent*. But there was a good number of years between the writings of Paul and those of Polycarp, to the Philippians; and yet we see *the bishop is never come home!* Why tarry the wheels of his lordship's chariot? Hath he not sped at court, that after so long an absence, there is no news of his return? Nor are we likely ever to hear any more of him: for now, they say, he is dead!"

4. Papias, bishop of Hierapolis, says nothing, in his writings, which favors Episcopacy. But he calls St. John, of whom he had been a *hearer*, a *presbyter*, (*elder*) which he would not have done, had St. John held an office superior to presbyters.

5. Justin Martyr, who sealed his testimony with his blood, about A. D. 160, speaks of *two offices* in the church, and *only two*; which he calls the *president*, and *deacon*. In his "Apology" for the Christians, he describes the celebration of the supper. The sacred symbols are delivered '*to* the president of the brethren.' After the prayer, he says, 'those that are called among us *deacons*, distribute to every one of those that are present.' Relative to their public worship, he informs, that after the reading of the holy Scriptures, 'the president admonishes and exhorts.' Not a hint is found in this noted author, of but *one order* of ministers; though he wrote largely to the Roman emperor, describing the state and practice of the church, to induce him to abolish persecution.

6. Irenæus, bishop of Lyons, is mentioned with some confidence, by Episcopalian, as affording evidence in their favor. It is true, some of his words, taken by themselves, may seem to favor this system. But when we consider his object, and consult other parts of his writings, all this appearance vanishes at once; and his testimony is fully in our favor. This I will now make to appear; and that he applied the titles *bishop* and *elder* promiscuously to the same persons; and had no idea of *three*, nor yet of *two* official ranks in the gospel ministry.—Be pleased then, to pay a candid attention to the following comparisons of some different parts of his writings.

(1.) Irenæus says, (Lib. 3. cap. 3.) "The apostolic tradition is present in every church. We can enumerate those, who were constituted bishops by the

"*Naked Truth*," says, "I hope my reader will see what weak proofs are brought for this distinction and superiority of order, (i. e. between bishops and presbyters.) No Scripture; no general consent of primitive doctors and fathers; no, not one primitive father of note, speaking particularly and home to the purpose." †

This is "*naked truth*" indeed! and seems like a great confession, for a *modern bishop*. It truly does appear, that impartial

apostles in the churches, and their successors even to us, *who taught no such thing*, (i. e. as those doctrines he was confuting.) Here, before we proceed, let it be noted, that this author was not laboring to prove a succession of bishops from the apostles; but a *transmission of doctrines* from them. In doing this, he had occasion to mention, as a well known fact, a succession of bishops from the apostles, who had transmitted the true faith. And he calls them alternately *bishops*, and *elders*; as you will see.—He proceeds: "By shewing the tradition and declared faith of the greatest and most ancient church of Rome, which she received from the apostles, and as come to us through the *succession of the bishops*."—Compare this with his following: (Lib. 3. cap. 2.) "When we challenge them [the heretics] to that apostolical tradition, which is preserved in the churches, through the *succession of the presbyters*, they oppose the tradition, pretending that they are wiser than not only the *presbyters*, but the *apostles also*." Here then, his *succession of bishops* from the apostles, is only a *succession of presbyters* from the apostles: and his *presbyters* he ranks next in dignity to the *apostles*.

(2.) He says, (Lib. 4. cap. 53.) "True knowledge of the doctrine of the apostles, according to the *succession of bishops*, to whom they delivered the church in every place, which doctrine hath reached us, preserved in its most full delivery."—Compare this with the following: (Lib. 4. cap. 43.) "Obey those *presbyters* in the church, who have succession, as we have shown, from the apostles; who with the succession of the episcopate, received the gift of truth." Thus the *succession of bishops* from the apostles, (which he had so often 'shown' them) was no other than a *succession of elders*; and their *succession* was the *succession of the episcopate*; i. e. they were the *true bishops*; as you will see confirmed under the next particular, where he calls this *episcopate* the *presbyterate*.

(3.) Does he say, (Lib. 5. cap. 20.) "These are far later than the *bishops*, to whom the *apostles delivered the churches*?" He shews his meaning by saying, (Lib. 4. cap. 44.) "We ought therefore to adhere to the *presbyters*, who keep the *apostles' doctrine*, and, together with the *order of the presbyterate*, do shew forth sound speech. Such *presbyters* the church nourishes, and of such the prophet says, I will give them *princes in peace*, and *bishops in righteousness*."—Thus, let *Irenæus* explain his own words; and his *bishops*, to whom the church was committed, are at the same time *presbyters*, whom the church nourishes; of which *presbyters* he makes *Isaiah* say, "I will give them *bishops in righteousness*." Here is but *one order* in the ministry. These he calls *elders*, and *bishops*. His *episcopate* was but a *presbyterate*. His *succession of bishops* was but a *succession of elders*.

(4.) He says, (Lib. 3. cap. 3.) "The *apostles founding and instructing that church*, [the Roman] delivered to *Linus* the *episcopate*; *Anacletus* succeeded him; after him *Clement* obtained the *episcopate* from the *apostles*; to *Clement* succeeded *Quaristus*; to him *Alexander*; then *Sextus*; and after him *Telosphorus*; then *Hugynus*; after him *Pius*; then *Anicetus*; and when *Sotor* had succeeded *Anicetus*, then *Elutherius* had the *episcopate* in the twelfth place. By this *succession*, that *tradition in the church*, and *publication of the truth*, which is from the *apostles*, is come to us."

* On title page of Chauncey's Complete View.

readers may see, without having occasion to boast of any peculiar visual acumen, the weakness of the proofs adduced for the prelatic distinction between bishops and elders.

In the third century, things appeared clearly operating toward the establishment of a prelacy. Upon this period Dr. Mosheim says, "The face of things began now to change, in the Christian church. The ancient method of Ecclesiastical government seemed in general still to subsist. While at the same time, by imperceptible steps, it varied from the primitive rule, and

Here the modern Episcopalian seems to find the first line of diocesan bishops in Rome, from the apostles to the twelfth bishop. And could this account be presented to his reader, with nothing else from the same author, his reader might be likely to become a proselyte to his scheme. But all the pleasing dream of argument vanishes, when he comes to read in the Epistle of the same author to Victor, the following account of the same succession of bishops, by name:—"These presbyters, (in the church of Rome) before Sotor, who governed the church, which thou (Victor) now governest, I mean Anicetus, Pius, Hugynus, Telesphorus, and Sextus, they did not observe it, (the day of Easter.) And those presbyters, who preceded you, though they did not observe it themselves, yet sent the eucharist to those of the other churches, who did observe it. And when blessed Polycarp, in the days of Anicetus, came to Rome, he did not much persuade Anicetus to observe it, as he (Anicetus) declared that the custom of the presbyters, who were his predecessors, should be retained."

This passage totally ruins the Episcopal arguments from Irenæus. For his succession of bishops is only a succession of presbyters. And Anioetus, bishop of Rome, denominated his "predecessors" "presbyters." These *bishops* are the *elders*, whom the apostles ordained in every church. Thus Irenæus is so far from favoring the Episcopal cause, that his writings furnish full evidence in opposition to it. This will appear more fully, if possible, when we consider the *rank* in which his Gallic church placed Irenæus himself. He is usually called "the bishop of Lyons," and was a notable character. His church had occasion to send him on a message to Rome, with letters to the bishop. The elders of Lyons wrote his letter of introduction, which begins thus: "Father Eleutherius, we wish you health in all things, and always in God. We have requested Irenæus, our brother and colleague, to deliver to you these letters." Here, instead of styling Irenæus their *bishop*, or *Right Reverend Father in God*, they call him their "brother and colleague." Eusebius informs, that Irenæus, in these letters, is called a presbyter; upon which bishop Stillingfleet remarks, "Irenæus is sent by the church of Lyons, on a message to Rome; when, notwithstanding his being bishop, they call him *presbyter* of that church. What could any one imagine, but that the bishop was nothing but senior presbyter, or one who had a *primacy of order among*, but no divine right to a power of jurisdiction over, his fellow presbyters?"

But, say Episcopilians, Irenæus in one place speaks of "bishops and presbyters." Does not this import a distinction of offices? And does it not give the superiority to bishops, who are put first?—*Reply.* Let this one passage then, decide the dispute; we will rest the whole weight of our cause upon it. The passage is this: "He (Paul) applies himself to the bishops and presbyters, convened at Miletus, who were of Ephesus, and the neighboring towns, because he was going to Jerusalem." Now, please to recollect the interview here alluded to, Acts xx. 17. Paul called to him "the elders of the church" of Ephesus: and, among other things, he charged them to "take heed to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost had made them overseers"—in the original, bishops. Irenæus viewing this passage, calls those elders of the church "bishops and elders," because they were informed that the Holy Ghost had made them bishops. I ask, do we find them, in this passage, two orders of men? And do we find here bishops superior to elders? Was it possible for Irenæus, or for any man of

degenerated toward the form of a *religious monarchy*. For bishops aspired to higher degrees of power and authority, than they had formerly possessed; and not only violated the rights of the people, but also made gradual encroachments upon the *privileges of the presbyters*. And, that they might cover their usurpations with an air of justice, and an appearance of reason,

common sense, to view them thus? No; all see, on the face of the passage, that both these titles were applied to the same persons. The elders were informed, that the Holy Ghost had made them bishops. Are Episcopalian willing that this shall be viewed as a fair specimen of their logic, of their fairness in quoting authors, and of the strength of their arguments?

Sentences, detached from their connexion, may be adduced, and may, by an able hand, be made to appear very plausible, in favor of Episcopacy. But when they come to be examined, and compared with other parts of the same author, the speciousness of the argument vanishes at once! And it is matter of solemn regret, that the writings of the pious fathers of the two first centuries should be thus treated, at this late and enlightened period, and made to advocate a sentiment to which they were total strangers.

7. Clement of Alexandria is the last who wrote in the second century; and will be the last here noted. Episcopalian seek to make him testify in their favor; but in vain. He in one passage speaks of "bishops, presbyters, and deacons;" therefore some imagine he must have been an Episcopalian! But let us examine the passage. In a figurative strain, he says, "Now in the church here, the progression of bishops, presbyters, and deacons, I take to be imitations of the evangelical glory, and of that dispensation which, the Scriptures tell us, they look for, who following the steps of the apostles, have lived according to the Gospel. These men, the apostles write, being taken up into the clouds, shall first minister as deacons; then be admitted to a rank in the presbytery, according to the progression in glory." Now, is it more certain that this author meant, in that first clause of his paragraph, to intimate an official distinction between bishops and elders, than that Irenaeus, in his same phraseology just noted, meant such a distinction? But Clement himself decides, in the same passage, that he meant no such distinction. For though in a diffuse style he mentions bishops, presbyters, and deacons; yet when he comes to confine his thoughts to the offices found in the church, he finds but *two*, deacons and presbyters. His saints (arrived to glory) first minister as deacons, and then as presbyters. Now had he known of ~~diocesan~~ bishops, he would surely have added, 'and then as bishops?' for this would better have illustrated his subject—the progression in glory. His stopping then, short of such a superior order of bishops, shows that he had no idea of such an order. He knew of no office higher than a presbyter.—Men often speak of 'evangelists, pastors, and teachers,' without designating to be considered Episcopalian.

Clement, in one passage, speaks of 'presbyters, bishops, and deacons.' Does he here mean, that presbyters are superior to bishops? Nothing is more vain than such arguments.—Clement once speaks of 'the first seat' in the presbytery. This, to be sure, Episcopalian must have filled by a bishop! But we say, No: it must have been filled by a presbyter; or it was not a seat in the presbytery. It was filled by a moderator, or president.

In other passages, Clement is full in our favor. He says—'In like manner, in the church, the presbyters maintain the form of that kind, which makes men better; and the deacons, that which is ministerial. In both these ministries, the angels serve God in the dispensation of earthly things.' Surely here, Clement knew of but two offices in the church—elders, and deacons.

Clement relates an account of St. John: That he once beheld a young man of good appearance; and John said to a bishop present, 'who was set over all, I commit this young man to thy custody,' meaning, probably, that he should train him up for the ministry. The account continues: 'And the presbyter [elder] taking the young man, brought him to his house.' Here, in the same

they published new doctrines concerning the nature of the church, and of the *Episcopal dignity*.^{*}

Here then, the evil was clearly under way. We find, in some authors of that period, that the titles, *bishop* and *elder*, had by this time become distinguished. The style *bishop* was now appropriated to the standing moderator, or president, of their consociating connexion ; and the title of *presbyter*, or *elder*, to the other pastors of churches. And some of these moderators, or presidents, being thus dignified with the title of *bishop* in its appropriated sense, began to exercise an ambitious desire to be received as a superior order in the Gospel ministry. To prepare the way for this, they labored and published “new doctrines concerning the *Episcopal dignity*.”—But yet ample evidence is exhibited, in that period, that these new styled bishops were by no means generally received as possessing a superior office. Firmilian, bishop of Cæsarea, in a letter to Cyprian, asserts, “All power and grace are placed in the church where *elders preside*; in whom is vested the power of baptizing and of ordination.”† Here Firmilian testifies, that *elders did preside* in the church, and had the *power of ordination*. And no officer is by him admitted in the church as superior to *elders*. “All power and grace (he says) are placed in the church, where *elders preside*.”

In the fourth century, bishops had got their object of ambition nearly completed. The celebrated Mosheim gives this information of them at that time : “Their first step was, an entire exclusion of the people from all posts in the administration of Ecclesiastical affairs. And afterward they by degrees divested

breath. he calls that preacher, to whom John committed this trust, the *bishop*, and the *elder*. So easy was it for Clement, as it had been with the apostles, and all others, to speak of the same men as both *elders* and *bishops*.

In short, *Episcopalians* have nothing to support their cause, in the writings of the two first centuries. After this period, and in the dark ages, they find much in their favor, if indeed it may be said to be in their favor. It is then, matter of very great astonishment, to see the confidence with which *Episcopal writers assert*, that “it is evident unto all men,” that their cause descended from the apostles! that “the Christian church, in the ages next succeeding the apostles, assert, with one universal consent,” that this is the case ! that it “has the earliest records of the church to support it, and there was scarce any article of faith more firmly believed!”—One *Episcopal writer* adds, “We have the same evidence that *Episcopacy* was the government of the primitive church, in the purest ages of Christianity, that we have for the *canon of Scripture* ! ?”—If assertions would answer, in the room of truth and evidence, the cause of *Dissenters* is lost ! It is no wonder that multitudes of such round assertions should, in this country, gain some proselytes. But many of the best *Episcopal* characters, not excepting some *bishops*, have felt and confessed the vast scantiness of arguments to support their cause.

even the presbyters of their ancient privileges, and their primitive authority, that they might have no importunate protestors to control their ambition, or oppose their proceedings ; and, principally, that they might either engross to themselves, or distribute as they thought proper, the possessions and revenues of the church. Hence it came to pass, that at the conclusion of this (the fourth) century, there remained no more than a mere shadow of the ancient government of the church. Many of the privileges which had formerly belonged to the presbyters and people, were usurped by the bishops."*

Jerome, a most learned divine of this age, raised his warning voice against this impious usurpation ; and in a forcible manner evinced, that bishops were not, by divine appointment, an order superior to presbyters. He made the following conclusions : " As therefore, the presbyters know, that by the *custom* of the church they are subject to him who is their president ; so let bishops know, that they are above presbyters more by the custom of the church, than by the true dispensation of Christ."† This is information fully to our purpose. We are here assured, from that good authority Jerome, that the subjection of the presbyters to their stated moderators, (or presidents of consociations) was only by the stated *usage* of the church : and the superiority of bishops to presbyters, (after all their pretences) was only by *custom*, and not by *divine right*.

Thus we learn the *true origin of Episcopacy*. It is not of *divine institution* ! It is of *human invention* ! It sprang up with the dark ages. It grew with their growth, and strengthened with their strength ; till it made the *solemn experiment* of the Romish hierarchy, for twelve hundred and sixty years !

Let it be recollected, that the ambassadors of Christ have but *one commission* : that one commission cannot confer different grades of office : that we have no intimation of but one grade of office among the apostles, and their coadjutors and successors. The apostles were elders. Those whom they ordained were *elders*, and also *bishops*. They, and all their successors to the end of the world, were comprised in the one grade of ambassadors of Christ, in the pronoun "*you*" in the commission ; with whom the presence of Christ is to remain, till his last appearance.—They were to call no man father on earth. They were brethren, on an official parity. Ordinations, in the apostolic age, were performed by *presbyteries* ; collections of elders.

* Eccle. Hist. Cent. IV. Pt. 2. Chap. 2. Sec. 2.

† Olds, p. 170.

These most evident truths form some contrast with what we behold in some parts of the Christian world; *Arch Bishops, Bishops, Right Reverend Fathers in God, Lords Spiritual, Deans, Arch Deacons, Prebends, Rectors, Curates, Preaching Deacons.*

Thus we see by what authority the validity of the *ordination* and *standing* of the many thousands of Congregational or Presbyterian ministers is called in question, and denied. This denial can be no small thing. It goes to unchurch a very great part of the visible kingdom of Christ; and a part not the most dubious, in point of real practical religion, and tokens of the divine presence and approbation. Is this walking charitably? Is it a genuine fruit of righteousness, and of the Spirit of Christ? If great and good men have fallen into this mistake, does this circumstance render it right and safe to follow them? Are there not great and good men also of the Dissenters? multitudes of divines of eminent talents and piety, and who have been instrumental in the salvation probably, of millions of souls? But, "to the law and to the testimony." We are not to compare ourselves with fellow-men: and we are to follow no men any farther than they follow Christ.

I proceed,

III. To remark upon some things in the Episcopal system, which I cannot approve.

When a system of religion is urged upon us, as being apostolic and divine, and insinuating that we, in being destitute of its peculiarities, have essentially departed from the word of God; the propagators of such a system ought to expect that the merits of their scheme will be examined. We must, in such a case, "search the Scriptures;" and search the peculiarities of the scheme urged upon us. Truth and righteousness will never be injured by investigation.

I shall not confine myself to much system, in proposing my difficulties. And I shall remark only upon some of the difficulties which are most glaring.

1. Some things, relative to their administration of *infant baptism*, appear to me very exceptionable. I have believed, that, in order for children to be proper subjects of infant baptism, *one* at least of the parents must, in a judgment of charity, be a spiritual child of Abraham. And I have believed, that in the dedication of children to God, in this holy ordinance, the parents in covenant do solemnly engage to "train up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord."

But, as I understand the administration of Episcopalianism among us, *any persons*, who please, may bring their children to baptism, whether they exhibit the *least evidence* of being the true spiritual children of Abraham, or not. And I understand that no very express covenant engagement is required of the parents, to train up their children for God: but that this duty is transferred to *sponsors*, or *god-fathers*—They are required to make indeed very solemn promises; but generally they are in no very favorable situation to perform them. The god-fathers are required to make such engagements, in behalf of the children about to be baptized, that the children are afterward instructed, in their catechism, to say of their god-fathers and god-mothers, “They did promise and *vow three things* in my name—1. That I should renounce the devil, and all his works; the pomps and vanities of this wicked world; and all the sinful lusts of the flesh—2. That I should believe all the articles of the Christian faith—3. That I should keep God’s holy will and commandments, and walk in the same, all the days of my life.” Truly, these are solemn vows! One would think they contain as *really too much* for any creature to promise, as the parents are required to promise *too little*. How can a man promise and vow that other people’s children *shall do* such *gracious things* as these? and shall persevere in them, till they die? One would think that no mere man is able to engage such things.

But what is generally done, by such sponsors, to perform such vows? Common report, relative to this, is not favorable. And is it not too often the case, that little or nothing more, than to *make the solemn engagement*, is ever attempted? The child is baptized; and *sealed by the priest* with the sign of the cross, (unless the parents object to this latter sealing.) Is this sealing with the cross, of divine, or of human origin? What human power has any right to annex this to Christ’s institution of baptism?—The priest then says, “Seeing now, dearly beloved brethren, that *this child is regenerated*, and grafted into the body of Christ’s church, let us give thanks unto Almighty God for those benefits; and with one accord make our prayers unto him, that this child may lead the rest of his life according to this beginning”—And he adds, “We yield thee hearty thanks, most merciful Father, that it hath pleased thee to regenerate this infant with thy Holy Spirit, to receive him for thine own child, by adoption, and to incorporate him into thy holy church.”—What shall we say of this service? All who have Bibles, and believe in *regeneration by the Spirit of God*, are left to their own reflections.

2. My difficulties are by no means less, when I contemplate the Episcopal rite of confirmation. In their printed forms, it is

provided, that, so soon as children are come to competent age, and can say the creed, the Lord's prayer, the ten commandments, and can answer to the other questions in the short catechism, (a brief catechism in their books) they shall be brought to the bishop for confirmation. The bishop, (after reading a preface, reminding them of the promises of their god-fathers and god-mothers) enters on the prayer for them, which begins thus: " Almighty and everliving God, who hast vouchsafed to regenerate these thy servants, by water and the Holy Ghost, and hast given unto them forgiveness of all their sins"—then laying his hands on each one, at the close of a short intercession, he enters on the collect of prayer for them, as *God's servants*; and adds, "upon whom, after the example of thy holy apostles, we have now laid our hands, to certify them, by this sign, of thy favor, and gracious goodness toward them."

With a degree of astonishment, I feel inclined to ask, What part of our inspired system of Christian duties is here fulfilled? Is this rite the well known token of regeneration? Has the bishop such knowledge of the human heart, and of the invisible operations of grace, that he may thus publicly and officially appeal to God, that all the *mixed multitudes*, who apply for confirmation, are indeed regenerated by the *Holy Ghost*, and have received the *forgiveness of all their sins*? Has God appointed the imposition of the bishop's hands on all, who learn to repeat the *creed*, the *Lord's prayer*, the *ten commandments*, and their few *answers* of catechism, as the well known *token*, to certify to them their actual possession of the divine grace and favor? Is this the true evangelical pledge of the faith of assurance? I see not but it is thus, if what the bishop solemnly declares to the Almighty be true! But if so, we have got to learn our Bibles over again. For we never before understood them in this light. The apostles, under inspiration, did indeed (among other miracles wrought for the confirmation of the *Gospel* in those early days) impose their hands on *real converts*, in order to communicate to them (in certain instances where God directed) the miraculous gifts of the *Holy Ghost*. But these gifts have long since ceased from the church, as unnecessary. Paul assured the *Corinthians*, they *were* thus to cease. "Charity never faileth. But whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away." And did not such miraculous gifts in fact cease, when the canon of Scripture became full? Why then should that special act of imposition of hands, (which God saw fit for that time to make the means of conveying those miraculous gifts;) why should this *dry form*, this *shadow without the substance*, be supposed to continue? Not a word do we find of any divine assurance that it *was* to continue. Not a single example do

we find of it, as practised by the immediate successors of the apostles. And not an instance of it do we find, (according to my present apprehension) in the first ages of the church, as though it were to be received as a permanent divine ordinance. If this rite was found in a corrupt church in the dark ages, one would think that simply this could furnish no sufficient warrant for bishops now to practise it.

In one text, Heb. vi. 1., we read of “the doctrine of laying on of the hands.” But no hint of evidence is furnished, that this text alludes to any thing more than the imposition of hands in the consecrations of church officers. It can furnish no sufficient warrant for the practice under consideration. For simply the fact, that the apostles did impose their hands on some new converts, to confer on them the miraculous gifts of the Holy Ghost, no more furnishes a warrant for their successors in the Gospel ministry to attempt to imitate them in this, than the fact, that the apostles wrought many other miracles, furnishes their present successors with a warrant constantly to attempt (though they never succeed) to work miracles. Let me ask, Do the miraculous gifts of the Holy Ghost, in these days, ever attend the imposition of the bishop’s hands? If not, God surely does not seem much to own them, in this their attempt to imitate his inspired apostles, who imposed hands on the regenerate to communicate the miraculous gifts of the Spirit.

The rite of confirmation, as now used by Episcopalianists, seems most unhappily calculated to confirm poor souls in delusion, relative to the nature and necessity of regeneration by the Spirit of Grace. Unless prevented by a miracle of grace, how can it do otherwise than confirm unconverted youth in the false hopes and vain belief that they are indeed “regenerated by the Spirit of God, and have received forgiveness of all their sins,” merely because they are subjects of some external ceremonies? The subjects of confirmation are assured of regeneration and pardon, in a most solemn appeal to God, by the venerable and learned bishop, who is warranted to make this appeal by the united and highest authorities of the Episcopal church. This is done in the solemn assembly of those, whom children and youth are taught to hold in veneration; as parents, godfathers, godmothers, and all the church. Is it probable that youth, who are not savingly convinced of sin by the Spirit of God, and who are already prone to think well of themselves, and to cry, Peace; is it at all probable, that such youth, under confirmation, will not be led to believe that things thus taught them are true?

Will any comfort themselves here, by saying, It is so glaringly evident, both that these external ceremonies are not regenera-

ion by the Holy Spirit, and also that they are not an infallible token that their subjects have obtained such regeneration, that these subjects can be in little or no danger of being hence confirmed in a false hope of being already subjects of grace ! I answer : Can this be an honorable and pious reason, or even palliation for the use of such language, that it is so *manifestly untrue*, there can be little or no danger of its being believed ? Why should such solemn assurances be given, unless they be designed to be believed ?

I well know it is said by some advocates for Episcopacy, We do not pretend, either that baptism, or confirmation, actually regenerate ; nor yet an infallible evidence of it. *Reply*—Why then is the solemn appeal made to Almighty God, that the subjects of these ceremonies are regenerated by his Spirit, and are pardoned ? Can God be pleased with such assertions, when no evidence exists of their truth ? Should any comfort themselves, that there can be little or no danger of people's coming to the rite of confirmation, till they have evidence of regeneration and pardon : *Reply*—Fact decides otherwise. Are not some confirmed, who not only give *no evidence of grace*, but exhibit *ample evidence of the want* of it ? Indeed no distinguishing evidence of grace is required of the candidates for confirmation.*

* Relative to duties, which the church owes to baptized children, I am unwilling to dismiss that part of the subject, without remarking, that it is matter of the deepest regret that our churches have been so sadly in the habit of neglecting baptized children. I believe that great and solemn duties, in relation to them, are binding upon Christians. And it is matter of joy, that after the hearts of the fathers have been so long and so lamentably forgetful of their dear offspring, they have of late begun to be turned to them. Churches are inquiring, what duties are incumbent relative to the lambs of the flock ? Many are waking up to the performance of those duties ; collecting their baptized children together ; instructing them ; teaching them their standing as to the visible kingdom of Christ ; reminding them that they are subjects of the *seal of this kingdom* ; urging upon them the necessity of regeneration by the Spirit of God ; and unitedly praying with and for them.

General Associations have, of late, taken up this subject, and have formed resolves and recommendations to the churches. The Convention in Vermont have, not long since, published some excellent resolves upon this subject. [See anaplist for November, 1816, page 501.] It is predicted in Holy Writ, that in the last days, just before the Millennium, "the hearts of the fathers shall be turned to the children, and the hearts of the children to the fathers." This, we have reason to hope, is going speedily to be fulfilled. Then God will "make ready a people prepared for the Lord."

But the duties recommended are *far from being things calculated to confirm* baptized children in the delusive, fond idea, that they are *already converted*, and *sanctified*, merely because subjects of external privileges. They are calculated to rest their attention to this subject ; to alarm them with a sense of their being *utterly destitute of these things* ; and to impress them with a view of the infinite importance of their truly becoming subjects of 'regeneration by the Holy Ghost,' & of the divine pardon, 'favor and gracious goodness.'

3. In Episcopal *ordination*, the bishop consecrates the priest in the established form of words, which begins thus : " Receive the Holy Ghost, for the office and work of a priest in the church of God, now committed to thee by the imposition of our hands." — I should have supposed that the hands of ordination are not "*suddenly*" to be laid on any man, till some good evidence has already been obtained of his having received the Holy Ghost to fit him for the pastoral work. Had Timothy ordained his elders, without good evidence of this, it could not have been an act of obedience to the divine injunction, " Lay hands suddenly on no man." The inspired apostles would not impose their hands on the first *deacons* chosen, till they had received some good evidence that they were "*full of the Holy Ghost.*" See Acts vi. 1—6. Yet these men were to be consecrated only to the business of managing the temporalities of the church. We have no account of even inspired apostles officially commanding any one to "*receive the Holy Ghost.*" If a candidate for an Episcopal priest have not received the Holy Ghost, to fit him for his work, before he is presented for the imposition of hands ; it is worthy of serious consideration, whether this official formality will indeed communicate to him that holy heavenly Agent !

For myself, I cannot receive a system, which contains such things as these. I much prefer to continue in the *plain old path* of "*the law and the testimony.*"

It is true, the great Head of the church, after his resurrection, and after he had officially received the communication of "*all power,*" did indeed, once, breathe on the disciples, and said "*Receive ye the Holy Ghost.*" But it would seem as though a man must first be indeed what one, in the dark ages fancied himself to be, *Christ's vicar on earth*, "*sitting in the temple of God, and showing himself that he is God,*" before he could deem it suitable (without evident commission thus to do) to imitate this example of the King of Zion.

4. Another of my difficulties with the Episcopal system is this ; their creed gives *too much power* to vain man, who is but of yesterday, and knows nothing. In their twentieth article it is said, "The church hath power to decree rites or ceremonies and authority in controversies of faith." But is this the case indeed ? Then the King of Heaven is not the only Lord of the conscience. It has, beside Him, *lords on earth.* This power has been exercised, to the cruel oppression of many of the people of God : as in the British *Act of Uniformity.* It was this power which drove our fathers from Britain, to seek an asylum in this western world, this wild hemisphere of savage beasts and men.

that they might here enjoy liberty of conscience, free from Episcopal oppression ! Can American Christians then, here receive and cherish such a system ? Shall it here ever be permitted to follow, and extirpate the dissenting principles of our pious fathers, and plant itself on their ruins ? Shall it thus shame the ashes of all the pious first settlers of New-England ? We wish all the subjects of this system, in the old lands, well—We rejoice to hear of their great *exertions* and *success*, together with the pious Dissenters there, in promoting the Redeemer's cause : But we really cannot wish to see the *peculiarities* of Episcopacy attempting to undermine the peaceable churches of the Dissenters in America. We should not be willing to have the principles, in the article above noted, become *prevalent here*; and to have all the peculiarities of their system here established and enforced. Many have charged the ministers of New-England with a desire to institute a kind of hierarchy ; or have an established religion. For myself, I am *sure* these ministers *never conceived such a desire*. But should the Episcopalian sentiments here prevail, I could not in conscience exempt its propagators from such a charge. Their system is well known to be perfectly calculated for such an object.

The above article modestly says, “ The church hath power to decree rites or ceremonies, and authority in controversies of faith.” But the power is not in the church, but in the *bishop*. The church has no power even to perform her own most evident duties, without leave obtained *from him*. It is in fact the *bishop* then, (or the *college of bishops* in this country where there is no King and Parliament to exercise it) that have this power. Should it be said, No, in this country, the “ Episcopal Convention” (consisting of bishops, priests, and laity) have this power—I grant it : But the bishops have a *negative* power upon the other two branches in the Convention. So that virtually the power is vested in them. And is it not an essential peculiarity of the Episcopal system, that all Ecclesiastical power is *officially vested in the bishops* ? Most certainly. Even if the King and Parliament exercise it, it is only as being a collection of the *official successors* of the apostles. All the inferior clergy and the laity acknowledge the supreme power of the *bishop*, and promise obedience to him.

Now, how can this part of the Episcopal code, that “ the church hath power to decree rites or ceremonies, and authority in controversies of faith,” consist with the command of Christ, “ Call no man Father upon earth ; for one is your Father, who is in heaven.” “ And be not ye called Rabbi : For one is your Master, even Christ ; and all ye are brethren.”

God alone is Lord of the conscience, both in controversies of faith, and in all the ordinances, the "rites and ceremonies" of his religion. If the contrary principle be admitted, men will soon, in some degree at least, "make void the law of God through their traditions." They will be in the utmost danger of "turning away their ears from the truth, and being turned unto fables." We might, in such a case, expect to find as many, at least, of exceptionable things, as we think are indeed found in the Episcopal system.

5. Their admission of members to the holy sacrament of the supper, without exhibiting any distinguishing evidence of a new heart, appears like a profanation of this sacred institution. The holy supper was evidently designed for the *children of God*, as such. "But unto the wicked God saith, What hast thou to do, to declare my statutes, or that thou shouldst take my covenant into thy mouth?" "And of the rest durst no man join himself unto them. And believers were the more added unto the Lord." "The Lord added to them daily such as should be saved." The tenor of Scripture does clearly decide that children's bread should be given to *children only*.

An indiscriminate admission of members to baptism, to Episcopal confirmation, and to the *table of the Lord*, does in fact form a dreadful contrast with what I esteem the plain language of the word of God upon the subject; and seems fully calculated to promote *hypocrisy* and *infidelity*. The arch atheist, Voltaire, would occasionally glory in his being a communicant at the sacramental table. Where nothing is enjoined, as an essential qualification for confirmation, and the Lord's supper, but to be able to repeat the *creed*, the *Lord's prayer*, the *ten commandments*, and *answers* in a short catechism, or a few such things; it may be said to be equal to an *indiscriminate admission*. For the most irreligious characters may easily learn to repeat these lessons. And then officially to pronounce them "regenerated by the Holy Ghost," to declare that God "has vouchsated to give them forgiveness of all their sins," and by imposition of hands to "certify them of God's favor and gracious goodness," does appear like a flagrant instance of healing the wound of their souls *slightly*, saying, *Peace, peace, when there is no peace.*

God said to the prophet, Jer. xv. 19. "If thou take forth the precious from the vile, thou shalt be as my mouth: let them return unto thee; but turn not thou unto them." Many in those days did not take forth the precious from the vile. And God condemned their conduct. "They have healed also the hurt of the daughter of my people slightly, saying, Peace, peace, when there is no peace." Twice God complains, in these very

words, in Jeremiah. And in Ezekiel, he says, " Because, even because they have seduced my people, saying, Peace, and there was no peace : And one built up a wall ; and, lo, another daubed it with untempered mortar : Say to them who daub it with untempered mortar, that it shall fall ; and a stormy wind shall rend it." Such kind of conduct produced the ruin of Israel ; and has eternally destroyed millions of poor souls !—The apostle says, " Ye observe days, and months, and times, and years ; I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labor in vain." Again he says, " If ye be dead with Christ, from the rudiments of the world, why, as though living in the world, are ye subject to *ordinances after the commandments and doctrines of men* ? Which things have indeed a shew of wisdom, in *will-worship and humility*, and neglecting the body, not in any honor, to the satisfying of the flesh." Will-worshippers always " neglect the body" (the true church) of Christ. " Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof ; from such turn away." Of the same kind of characters Christ says, " Thou hast a name to live, and art dead." And again, " In vain do they worship me ; teaching for doctrine the commandments of men." It becomes all of us to see to it, that such Scriptures do not describe our case. " For what is the hope of the hypocrite, though he have gained, when God taketh away his soul ? "

6. There is something in the manner, in which Episcopilians propagate their sentiments among us, which appears to me not according to the word of God. Instead of going where Christ is not preached, as did Paul, are not this sort of people too often doing what Paul was inspired to declare he would not do, *invading the circles of labors belonging to other men* ? Paul assures the church, that he was sent " to preach the Gospel in the regions beyond them ; and not to boast in another man's line of things made ready to his hand." " For we stretch not ourselves beyond our measure." " Yea, so have I strived to preach the Gospel, not where Christ was named, lest I should build upon another man's foundation : But, as it is written, To whom he was not spoken of, they shall see ; and they that have not heard, shall understand." " Not boasting of things without our measure, that is, of other men's labors." These things Paul was inspired to write, for the regulation of Christ's kingdom down to the end of the world. Paul considered, that if the Holy Ghost had made a man overseer in a place, God would never approve of others crowding upon him, to root out and destroy his vineyard. God is a God of order, and not of confusion. He does not excite his children to counteract each other. If any wish to propagate the Gospel, the field is wide.

There are vast tracts of country, and multitudes of people, destitute of the stated Gospel ministry. Why should these be neglected, while great attention is paid to *old towns and societies, already under a Gospel ministry of their own choosing?* To break in upon such communities, is eventually to *promote irreligion!* It is to divide and scatter the sheep of Christ ; to make sad the hearts of his ministers and people ; to weaken and discourage the true children of God ; and to excite and strengthen opposition to the cause of vital piety !

In the view of exertions made to break up old regular Congregational churches and societies, and to prevent the support of their ministers, who have been regularly called, and have been faithful and successful in their labors ; one is led to inquire, " Is Christ divided ?" Can the multiplying of altars against altars be a work of the Holy Ghost ? Did Christ himself, when on earth, do any thing to encourage such a practice ? Did he ever set up separate places of public worship ? Did he not invariably submit to the order of God already established among the Jews, although the Jews had become very corrupt in doctrine and manners ? Had not Christ as much occasion to institute new places of public worship, among the persecuting and hypocritical Jews, as have Episcopalians *among us* ? But Christ would do nothing to encourage *schisms or divisions* among the visible people of God. And the light of eternity will show, that it is no small thing to promote such divisions ; however many now make light of it ; yea, glory in such a practice.

The churches are forewarned, that "*offences will come.*" But Christ denounces his *woes* against the people by whom they come. He warns of fatal divisions, and errors. "*Many will cry, Lo here, and lo there ; and, if it were possible, they would deceive even the very elect.*" But the Prince of peace commands, "*Go ye not after, nor follow them.*" Paul says, "*Mark those who cause divisions and offences, contrary to the doctrine ye have received, and avoid them : For such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly ; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple.*"

We are beset with snares. Fatal dangers abound. Most important then, are the divine directions, "*Take heed that no man deceive you.*" Be not led away with divers and strange doctrines." "*Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.*" "*Be ye steadfast and immovable.*"

We act under the omniscient eye of our Judge ; and are hastening to his awful bar. There we shall find the truth of what God assures, that " There is one Lord, one faith, one baptism ; one God and Father of all." We shall there find there is but one heaven ; and one way that leads to it. And there we shall find, that the *one way* to heaven includes a new and gracious heart ; a charitable walk with the people of God ; and a faithful keeping of the "*unity of the Spirit in the bonds of peace.*" A religion of nobility, a genteel religion, adapted to the feelings of the natural heart, will not appear to good advantage, on that great burning day !

167
the standard of
the people and
the nation brought up

the people

DATE DUE

FORM 335 40M 9-42

Div.S. 262.12 S646E 510005

D025016370



Duke University Libraries